

Text: Habakkuk 2:6-20 Title: A Prophecy of a Prophecy, Date/Place: The Road, 6.25.17, AM

A. **Opening illustration: We are the beavers, mighty mighty beavers...**

- B. Background to passage: This is the second answer of God to the prophet's complaint about the lack of action on God's part to punish all the iniquity in the land; and the further astonishment at His methodology. After promising that this vision would come to pass and admonishing them to faithfully wait upon, God warns the "puffed up" that they would not go unpunished. He says that the surviving captives of the nations that the Babylonians pillaged and captured would taunt them with prophetic utterances regarding their just and soon coming accountability and punishment from God. These come in the form of a "woe" or lament.
- C. Two things about this message as a precursor: 1) the morals laid out in this passage apply not to a simple degree, but do a raised bar for believers to demonstrate, when proper credit is given the beautiful life that God provides, and calls us to exemplify and enjoy. 2) This is not simply a list of bad things that they have done that will earn them the judgment of God, this is a pointer to greater truths - captivity, deliverance, and grace.
- D. Main thought: Our text gives us five woes that the captives would speak to the Babylonians

A. **Woe to you who steal (v. 6-8)**

1. These woes are pretty straightforward on their respective topics. The first says that those who gain wealth in an unjust manner will have their reward. People who gain their wealth or empires by unjust means will be held accountable by God. This passage says that those that they have taken advantage of will rise up and rebel against them. It is similar to the "what goes around comes around" adage.
2. Pro 22:16, James 5:1-4, 1 Tim 6:10, Eph 4:28,
3. **Illustration:** In the movie *A Bug's Life*, these grasshoppers make these ants gather all their food for them in exchange for protection. And they squash any rebellion quickly because the ants don't know that they outnumber the grasshoppers 100 to 1, **U.S. bank robberies, 1990: 5,942, in 1934 (John Dillinger's era): 86; average take for 1990 bank robbery: \$2,000 to \$3,000**
4. Most of you don't break into people's houses and take things. But let's think of some places that stealing is commonly justified in our minds or practiced outright in our society. Gambling. Doing shoddy work. Not respecting the employer's time constraints. Taking things from work. Using long-distance calls from work. Being deceitful in business transactions. Embezzlement. Overcharging (Luke 19:8). Corporate fraud. Copyright laws. Extortion. Blackmail. Adultery. Fornication. The biblical instruction to you if you have done these things is that you will pay for it, so repent, forsake, and restore.

B. **Woe to you who covet (v. 9-11)**

1. The second woe is directed against those who don't actually do all these things, but who want to. This is about wanting things that are not yours to the point of wishing others did not have them. This is not a spur of the moment sinful thought, this is an active train of thought, or a consuming thought, or a pleasurable thought, or a constant desire. God says that when your mind is swayed by covetous desires, you will give bad counsel to others, and ruin your own household. You can see how this would work in a large pagan government even more.
2. Ex 20:17, Ps 10:3-4, Phil 4:11, 1 Tim 6:6, Heb 13:5,
3. **Illustration:** If I am an atheist in my heart, making myself sovereign in place of God, and therefore arranging thing in accordance with my appetites and needs and fantasies, I become a pirate in society. I relentlessly look for ways in which I can get what is there for my own uses with no regard for what anyone else gets. Then I noticed a hole in the circle of the poison. Some of the poison was moving the opposite way--away from the hill. Some smaller, non-stinging ants had found this "food" and were stealing it from their ant neighbors. Thinking they were getting the other ants' treasure, they unwittingly poisoned themselves. When we see someone with more than we have, we must beware. The hunger to beg, borrow, or steal our way into what is theirs may poison us spiritually.
4. Again, let's think about times that we do this or society excuses it. Pornography. Gambling. Materialism in our society is rampant. We live at the hilt of our incomes. We are always discussing what we are going to do on our house next, or the kind of vehicle that we want next. This overflows into our time because we work too much, then forsake our families or our churches. Debt has an huge financial, emotional, and physical burden upon life. Biblically speaking, we must remember that all the earth, all our possessions are owned by God. And we must learn and practice contentment. And we must maintain self-discipline and self-control.

C. **Woe to you who murder (v. 12-14)**

1. The third woe is toward those who kill others in the building of their kingdoms. The Babylonians were fierce and wicked people. They were ruthless to nations that they conquered, and to the captives which they brought home. God says that He will allow the nations to store up wrath for themselves with each life lost. Within this woe is a powerful reminder that God is large and in charge. It looks forward to a day where the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth as the waters do the sea. And it will happen!
2. Gen 4:15, 9:6, Matt 5:22, Rom 2:5,
3. **Illustration:** Two shop keepers in bitter competition. Angel came to one to grant one wish that the other would receive double. The man frowned, thought for a moment, and then said, "Here is my request: Strike me blind in one eye!" **Americans now alive who will one day be murdered: 2,000,000 (this doesn't include abortion statistics), Chances of your being killed by terrorists overseas: 1 in 650,000, chances of your being killed by Americans in Baltimore: 1 in 4,000, chances of your being aborted if you are in the womb of an American woman: 1 in 3.3.**
4. And of course we say that there are no murderers among us. But there are twofold. First, all of us are like Mel Gibson's cameo in The Passion of the Christ. We all drove the nail into the hand of God Himself. Secondly, Jesus says that if we are angry with our brother enough to call them names, you will be guilty of murder, and punishment will be a fiery hell. So, based on this thought, when we seek to harm others in any way, we will be held accountable as a murderer would. Other related places that our society will be held accountable will be in the areas of war and abortion. Ah, but one day, the glory of God...

D. **Woe to you who manipulate (v. 15-17)**

1. In order to add insult to injury the Babylonians would force them to get drunk, so that they could expose their nakedness to everyone for laughs. The point is that they were manipulating others for their own purposes. God says that all of that would return upon them. Even the violence done to the land, part of God's beloved creation will be repaid to their account.
2. Gen 19:33, 2 Sam 11:13,
3. **Illustration:** Unfortunately the closest parallel to such actions that I can think of in recent times is the whole scandal at the Abu Grab prison in Iraq.
4. Most of you don't offer your neighbors alcohol so that you can see them naked, but there are many other ways that we degrade and use others to fulfill our own sick needs and purposes. Bribery of others is a form of manipulation. We see it most often in family situations and at work. Manipulation comes in various forms in the family—anger, whining, nagging, sexual pressure, silence, and so on. At work we use others to accomplish what we want in our careers. Flirting, partiality, and office politics are all forms of manipulation to accomplish some other means. And we will be repaid. Another point of application here is toward Christian stewardship of the environment. We must refrain from excesses, but remember that we are in charge of the earth to manage it for a greater good.

E. **Woe to you idolaters (v. 18-20)**

1. The last woe is related to the things that are trusted in and consulted. The practice of idolatry was more common in those days than now, in the sense that we think of it. But the essence of worship is placing extreme value on something. The point of the woe is to emphasize the one true God, and the exclusivity of worshipping Him.
 2. Nevertheless, even though this was the greatest problem of the Babylonians, it points to the greatest thing in the bible. If the message in scripture was simply for men to do more good and less sin, and that there was a God who would punish those who don't measure up, the Babylonian gods would simply need to be placated with offerings and sacrifice, and Yahweh would be no different. The message is that the biblical storyline is about God providing a means of access to Himself because of his love, and because of a coming Lamb to be slain on behalf of all those that would turn to himself. The message of Habakkuk, as you will see more explicitly later, is that there is a God of grace who has called out a people from darkness to deliver a message of hope
 3. Ps 97:7, 135:15-18, Jer 10:3-6, Isa 40:18-26,
 4. **Illustration:** Hideyoshi, a Japanese warlord who ruled over Japan in the late 1500s, commissioned a colossal statue of Buddha for a shrine in Kyoto. It took 50,000 men five years to build, but the work had scarcely been completed when the earthquake of 1596 brought the roof of the shrine crashing down and wrecked the statue. In a rage Hideyoshi shot an arrow at the fallen colossus. "I put you here at great expense," he shouted, "and you can't even look after your own temple." **Idolatry is worshipping anything that ought to be used, or using anything that ought to be worshipped. - Augustine**
 5. However, much idolatry goes on today. People worship money, power, sex, possessions, recreation, relationships, and the list goes on. What do you place extreme value upon? Is there anything that is greater to you than Jesus Christ? This is what really gives meaning to life, not any other kind of worship in the world.
 6. Our faith is not a list of rules. This passage is not simply to say that injustice, manipulation, thievery, covetousness, murder are bad, and you shouldn't do them. However true that might be, it points us to the fact that every man stands guilty before God. The Babylonians for many more reasons than were mentioned here were guilty before God, and the Jews as well for the reasons that Habakkuk began the book, and as we see through the history of the nation; even before Israel was a nation is the relationships of the men/women that God wove his plan of salvation of the world throughout the scriptures.
 7. So, if this is the case, what is the point? As all men are guilty, God will always leave himself a remnant of people who will testify to the deliverance to come; to exercise faith in the deliverance of God for the captivity of sin that binds us all. Whether we know it or not, we are all rebels and traitors against a holy and loving God, and yet in that holiness and love, God provided Christ. He calls on us to put our faith in the only one who can deliver us from the curse of sin, rebellion, and condemnation that follows.
- A. **Closing illustration:** He wound up with an amazing 61, about 30 strokes under his usual game. Wait until he got back to the office and told them about this! But, suddenly, his face fell. He couldn't tell them. He could never tell anyone. **"Vigilantism was [often] carried out by citizens who were moderate and orderly in their application of force,"** but he notes that the danger of mob rule was also present. **Just ask the poor fellow whose grave at Boot Hill Cemetery in Arizona bears this epitaph: "Lynched by mistake."**
- B. Ps 137:8- O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, how blessed will be the one who repays you with the recompense with which you have repaid us.
- C. Invitation to commitment